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More than Words by Eternally-Yours-24

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Hurt-Comfort

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-01-07 16:29:26

Updated: 2018-01-07 16:29:26

Packaged: 2019-12-17 03:33:49

Rating: T

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,239

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: I hold onto him, afraid that if I let go I'll lose him all over again. (Will Byers x Female Reader)

More than Words

(y/n) = your name

Told from your point of view.

All of us were exceptionally close. Me, Dustin, Lucas, Mike, Eleven, and eventually Max. We were a club, a party, bound by laughter and trust and the notion that friends don't lie. It was always just us against the world. Will Byers, however, was still a different story completely. We had clicked in a way that some people may only dream of. I was always drawn to his quiet strength and how we would lose ourselves in the worlds we created together. Ones full of magic and bravery and kindness, of things our realities seem to lack. We would sometimes choose to communicate without uttering a single sentence. Because our relationship was more than just words.

It was that long black skirt I wore at the funeral that was not really his. When he did not lay cold in that box covered in white flowers, but in some place long forgotten, a place dark and empty and beyond our comprehension. It was hearing his frail voice singing through the static of the walkie-talkie, held in the hand of the mysterious girl with a number for a name, a river of red trickling from her nose. Yet as I heard his voice I began to realize how much hatred I felt for the monster that had taken him, and later as its flower-like mouth dripped foul saliva into my eyes as it hovered over me I knew we had to kill it. As Steve swung the bat into its rotted flesh I knew I had to make sure it never hurt anyone ever again.

Eleven's scream echoed through the air, into my brain and through the flickering lights. The monster's death screech joins the sound and I cower, hands over my ears and head spinning, watching that horrid beast turn into delicate flakes that flutter to the ground like dust. Heart pounding, I just breathe, and I know I have to find him now.

It was the relief I felt when I saw him in that hospital bed. His face was so pale, almost grey, encircled by oxygen tubes, but when his cracked and cold lips curled into a smile at the sight of me I knew he was still Will. *My Will.* And for once the tears I'd cried had been happy ones, though I saw his face slip into something terrifying,

hunted. Like a defenseless animal when a predator has finally caught up to it. He knew this wasn't truly over. What if it never was?

"There's something wrong with me," Will sobbed later on. His little body trembled uncontrollably and I'd never felt so helpless. I wanted to do something to ease his fears but I had no idea how and it was the worst thing I'd ever felt. "I keep seeing this...thing. It looks right at me, it knows who I am and who I love most. It wants to destroy them." He looked at me and I saw it again—that tortured expression, one that held something that a person should never have to feel, that shouldn't even exist. "It wants to kill you." He broke down and I felt it again. Hatred. Hatred for that hellish dimension and everything in it, and all I wanted to do was set fire to the place and watch it all burn. Little did I know that that would've been one of the worst things I could've done.

Will's screams were gut-wrenching. Everything felt blurred and surreal to me, but I still saw him, writhing on the bedsheets that were soaked with his own sweat. The doctor's and nurse's voices were so fast they all jumbled together as they huddled over him. I had been too numb to feel anything. "It hurts! I'm burning! It hurts! Make it stop!" I felt Mike's hand on my arm and I grabbed onto him. He turned me away so I wouldn't have to see it anymore. I wished we were anywhere but there.

It was not remembering anything about that particular night. All it had become was a black ink blot in my memories. I had been told some things about it, how Will had felt the pain when the scientists scorched the vines to stop them from spreading, but I never pressed for any more detail. Will never spoke about it. I wondered if he recalled any of it. Maybe it was best if I never found out.

It was sitting next to Mike as we watched Will slowly fall into a sleep induced by a needle in his arm. I wished these weren't the circumstances he'd have to return to once he awoke.

It was him still knowing who I was even though his brain was being consumed by the Mind Flayer. It was looking straight into his darkened eyes beneath the blinding glare of the lights and telling him about the countless hours we used to spend drawing pictures in his fort in the woods.

"We are going to burn it out of him."

Joyce's voice had been fierce. It contained that hatred that was constantly flowing through me, giving me strength but would later leave me drained. I'd went along with them as they carried Will out to the abandoned house that had once sheltered Eleven and all the secrets that came with her. I remained outside as they did it. Joyce had told me it would cause Will excruciating pain and I didn't think my soul could bare seeing him suffer anymore. But I had wanted to be there once he was finally himself again.

It was seeing that twisting, shrieking tendril of black smoke barreling out of the house and evaporating into the night, and seeing Nancy in the door way, and her not even being able to say a single word before I had jumped up. He looked like a little ghost when I saw him. Leaning up against his older brother, face drained completely of all color except for the dark circles under his tired eyes, his hospital gown drenched with sweat. I ran to him and he embraced me so tightly I could hardly breathe. His body was warm as I held him, both of us sobbing with relief, his own tears wet on my skin.

It was how our relationship was never quite the same afterward. It became full of small, idle touches—his fingertips brushing my arm in the middle of class or briefly holding hands as we walked down the school hallways. Like we were constantly checking to make sure we were both still there. We didn't even care when the others began teasing us about it. Lucas has been calling me Will's girlfriend for weeks now. Although it wasn't really like that at all.

Was it?

I'd never been woken up by the sound of the phone ringing from the kitchen before. The world outside was always still dark. I'd hear Will's panicked voice from the other line, saying he's had nightmares about faceless creatures trying to attack him from the shadows. I'd ride my bike straight to his house to comfort him, and he would sneak me in and we would tiptoe down to his room without making a noise, not wanting to wake up his mother or Jonathan.

"I can't get it out of my head. I can't get *him* out of my head," Will whispered as we lay on our backs beneath his blankets, a flashlight

between us. "It's like he's still haunting me. I can't forget about how hard I was fighting against him, endlessly, so he wouldn't hurt you. What happened to...to Bob, it wasn't a coincidence, you know." He was still so tormented, it was in his voice, his eyes, his posture. Like he was always trying to hide from something. "Eleven closed the gate. He can't hurt you anymore," I said. It was all I could think of to say. "I know," he replied quietly, almost a sigh. "I'm just...still afraid."

Even after I calmed him down I didn't leave. We'd stay in his room, discussing happier things, listening to Will's favorite tapes playing softly from the stereo until the faint blue light of dawn struggled to leak in through the windows. Will would often want me to stay for breakfast. I always felt bad about Joyce having another mouth to feed, though she insisted that it was no big deal and that I was a pleasure to have. She never questions why I'm even there in the first place.

A few weeks pass. Cheesy posters for the Snow Ball had begun appearing on all the walls—in the hallways, the classrooms, even the bathroom stalls. Partners and fancy outfits and dance themes was all anyone could talk about. The popular girls, the ones with straight glossy hair and all the right amounts of glitter and glamour, squealed about the hot boys that were supposedly taking them as their dates. Girls that were definitely not like me.

I was grabbing textbooks out of my locker as I talked to Max. She wasn't sure if she wanted to attend, and neither was I. I was never the school dance kind of person. "You should go. Dustin and Lucas would tie themselves to the train tracks just to take you," I told Max, and she shrugged. "I don't know. They may not have the guts to ask me. You know how they are," she said, and I chuckled in agreement. Then I felt a gentle tap on my shoulder, and I turned around to find a very nervous looking Will. He kept glancing at the ground and his cheeks were a bright red. He appeared to be holding something behind his back. "Hi Will," I said with a smile. Max nodded her head in greeting as well. "H-hey," he stammered, shifting anxiously. "Um..." Will finally attempted to fully meet my eyes, revealing the bouquet of pink roses he'd been hiding. He carefully slipped them into my hand and I felt my own face flush with warmth and joy as I realized what was getting ready to happen. "(y/n)...will you go to the Snow Ball

with me?" he asked.

"Yes!" I squealed, and I heard Will laugh with relief, though he was blushing harder than ever. "Yes, of course!"

Some people standing nearby started clapping for us, and while I could also feel the popular girls gawking at us in disbelief, I didn't care. Will hugged me, and I was grinning so hard my cheeks hurt. I was still smiling when we broke apart. Max rolled her eyes, but she was laughing. "You two are dorks."

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So, in the end, it was that long gown I wore, one that sparkled when the light hit it. One that was a complete contrast to that depressing black skirt. It was the red I painted on my lips, the gentle curl of my hair, and struggling to put my eyeliner on straight. It was the healthy Will that greeted me as I walked through the front door of his house. "You look so pretty," he said, almost in awe. "You look really nice too," I told him bashfully, admiring his own outfit.

It was hearing the click of Jonathan's camera as we posed for what felt like a thousand pictures. It was Joyce's proud smile as she watched us. "Can we go now?" Will groaned, taking my hand and attempting to get us all towards the direction of the door. Joyce waved us back. "No, no, one more, I promise!" she insisted excitedly, making Will groan again. "Hang in there, guys," Jonathan mouthed as he prepared to take another photo. I giggled.

It was taking about a million more in front of a silver and blue backdrop once we finally arrived at school, Will's arm around my waist.

"Thanks for always being there for me," Will says quietly as we slowly swayed to the music. It had taken a lot of encouragement from Max, Eleven, and the guys, since both of us were rather shy, but they'd eventually coaxed us out onto the dance floor. "Even when I wake you up in the middle of the night."

"I'll always be here if you need me, Will. *Always*. You're my best friend," I firmly assured him. He smiled and I smiled back, and he

leans in and presses a shy little kiss to my cheek. It makes my stomach fill with butterflies, their wings fluttering with excitement, and I cherish this moment with all of my heart.

Our reality isn't as perfect as the worlds we imagine together. They may never be. And though we are wounded (and there may be more wounds to come) I know we can rise above it. Will is still scarred and I am still angry, but it seems to get just a little better each day. Maybe if we stay together, all of us, we can mend each other, with or without words. Our friendship might just be enough.